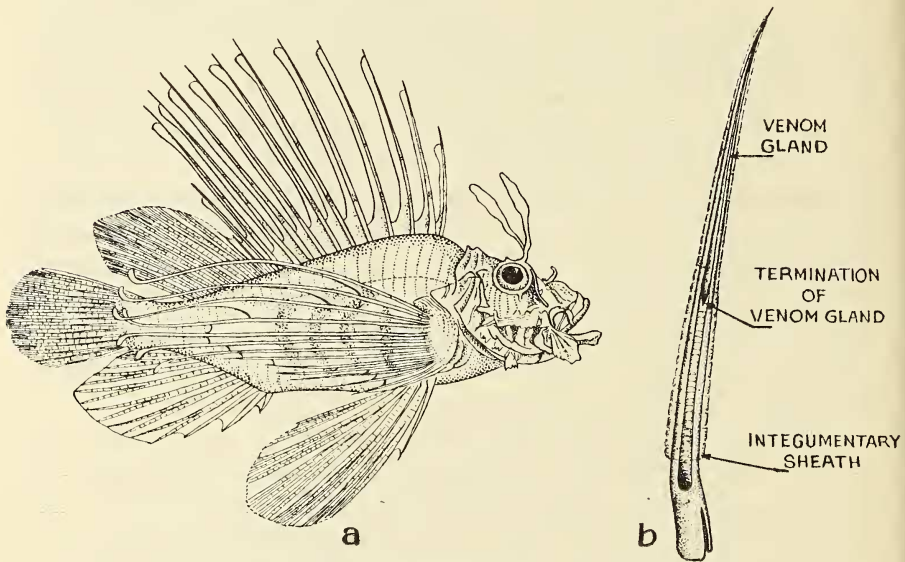


16. THE USE OF SCORPIONFISH (*PTEROIS* SPP.) SPINES AS A STIMULANT (?) IN COCK FIGHTS

(With a text-figure)

During a recent collection trip to Andaman Islands, from January to March, 1970, the authors were surprised to see a few scorpionfishes belonging to the genus *Pterois* (Fig. a) kept for sale at a fishing village near Diglipur, North Andamans. On enquiry, the local fishermen informed us that these stinging fishes are known locally as 'Murgi machi' and are generally purchased by the locals in connection with cock fights. The venomous dorsal spines (Fig. b) of these



a. *Pterois volitans* (Linnaeus).

b. *Pterois* sp. venom organs of dorsal spine.

fishes are regularly stuck into the body of the cock for a week before the fight. It is likely that during the process the dried venom containing dehydrated toxin gets dissolved in the body fluids or blood serum and acts as stimulant in the fight. This interesting folklore, however, needs further investigation.

The 'Murgi machi' (*Pterois* spp.) are venomous fishes and are characterised by 12-13 dorsal spines, 2-3 anal spines and 2 ventral spines. These spines are generally long, slender and straight. The sides of the spines are grooved and the grooves consist of a glandular tissue covered over by a thin integumentary sheath which is coloured and banded. The scorpionfishes, as the name implies are known for their

venomous nature. They are also known as zebrafishes, turkeyfishes, lionfishes, etc. They are brightly coloured and occur in shallow waters around coral reefs and rocky areas near the shores of tropical seas.

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17. ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *ICHTHYS COPUS* *INERMIS* (SWAINSON) OFF VIZHINGAM, KERALA

The only available information regarding the occurrence of *Ichthyoscopus inermis* (Family Uranoscopidae) is from Day (1878)¹ who had described a male specimen of 12" length from the Kanara Coast. No further report is available regarding the distribution of this species from the east and west coast of India.

On March 13th, 1969, a female specimen of *Ichthyoscopus inermis* measuring 390 mm., weighing 1373 gms. was collected from a 'Karamadi or Kamba vala' (Shore-seine) operated in the Vizhingam Bay.

Distinguishing Characters

Body elongate with a single dorsal fin; head covered with bony plates; mouth large with a cleft projecting upwards; small teeth on palate and jaws; eyes dorsal; anterior nostrils round, situated in front of the centre of eye and surrounded with papillae; an elongated angular flap edged with papillae behind the shoulder; lateral line close to the dorsal base; canary-yellow with pure white, round, irregular and oval spots on the body and white spots on the pectoral and dorsal fins; lateral portion below the eye black and soft; ventral and opercular portion light red.

The meristic counts and morphometric measurements are presented in the Table.

Analysis of the stomach contents (30 c.c.) showed that fish formed the main bulk of the food representing 90 per cent of the stomach contents. A single fish (*Pseudorhombus* sp.) of length 120 mm. was found in the stomach along with bottom mud mixed with sand particles which suggests a bottom feeding habit. Day (1878) in his account of this species has reported that the fish has a peculiar habit of bury-

¹ DAY, F. (1878) : Fishes of India.